

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4434

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3310

FOLLOWING TEL MADRAS 442 DTD 04 MAR 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 442

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: SITUATION WITH THE DMK

1. DURING MY CALL ON BRITISH DEPHICOM ALFRED HALL MARCH 3, HE INFORMED ME FORMER DMK MINISTER FOR LABOR AND TRANSPORT FOR TAMIL NADU K. RAJARAM HAD RECENTLY TOLD HIM THAT PRESSURES ON KARUNANIDHI TO RESIGN AS DMK PRESIDENT HAVE BEEN VERY HEAVY LATELY AND HAVE COME FROM A NUMBER OF PARTY SOURCES. ACCORDING TO RAJARAM, KARUNANIDHI HAS COUNTERED THESE DEMANDS BY SAYING THAT HE CAN NOT RESIGN SINCE THERE IS NO PARTY ORGANIZATION WHICH CAN ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION WITH FOUR HUNDRED OF THE SIX HUNDRED MEMBERS OF THE DMK STEERING COMMITTEE STILL UNDER DETENTION. (FIGURES OBTAINED FROM RELIABLE POLICE SOURCES PUT THE NUMBER OF FORMER DMK MEMBERS HELD UNDER MISA AT UNDER THE 1908 HELD UNDER "PREVENTIVE DETENTION.")

2. AS A COMPROMISE, RAJARAM TOLD HALL, KARUNANIDHI, NEDUCHEZIAN AND "TWO OR THREE OTHER ANTI-INDIRA HAWKS" HAD AGREED TO "GO ON LEAVE," PRESUMABLY INDEFINITELY, LEAVING PARTY AFFAIRS IN THE
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HANDS OF A STEERING COMMITTEE MADE UP OF MODERATE DMK MEMBERS.

THIS WOULD HOPEFULLY SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF THE MODERATES AND
ENABLE KARUNANIDHI TO SAVE SOME FACE.

3. EARLIER IN THE DAY MARCH 3, OUTGOING TAMIL NADU CHIEF SECRETARY
P. SABANAYAGAM TOLD ME HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED AT THE WAY THE DMK
HAD BROKEN UP IN SUCH A HURRY. THE PARTY, WHICH HAD BEEN BUILT
UP THROUGH MUCH HARD WORK AND WITH VIRTUALLY NO FUNDS, HAD
ENJOYED GREAT POPULAR APPEAL AND HAD HAD A GOOD SOLID BASE.
HOWEVER, SABANAYAGAM SAID, THE DMK LEADERS HAD BECOME "TOO
INTERESTED IN MONEY," INDICATING HIS BELIEF THAT DMK LEADERS FROM
KARUNANIDHI DOWN HAD BECOME CORRUPT. IN THE MEANTIME, RESIGNATIONS
FROM THE PARTY CONTINUE, THOUGH NO LARGE SCALE EXODUS HAS TAKEN
PLACE. (COMMENT: WE DO NEAR THAT, WITH CHARGES OF CORRUPTION
AGAINST KARUNANIDHI AND OTHERS, WIDESPREAD DISAFFECTION AND DEM-
ORALIZATION ARE APPARENT AT THE VILLAGELEVEL. END COMMENT.)

4. THE MADRAS PRESS OF MARCH 3 REPORTED KARUNANIDHI'S PRESS CON-
FERENCE OF THE DAY BEFORE IN WHICH KARUNANIDHI ANNOUNCED THAT HE
HAD RECEIVED A REPLY TO HIS LETTER OF FEBRUARY 17 TO UNION MINISTER
OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS OM MENTA WHEREIN KARUNANIDHI HAD ASSURED
THE GOI THAT THE DMK WOULD "APPROACH ALL PROBLEMS IN A PARLIAM-
ENTARY AND DEMOCRATIC MANNER." ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS,
MEHTA'S REPLY STATED THAT THE QUESTION OF RELEASING THOSE ARRESTED
IN TAMIL NADU IN THE WAKE OF THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S
RULE WOULD BE CONSIDERED "WITH DUE REGARD TO THE DEVELOPING SITU-
ATION IN THE STATE." IN THAT REGARD, SABANAYAGAM INFORMED ME MARCH
3 THAT 90 PERCENT OF THOSE DETAINED HAD BEEN RELEASED.

5. AS A FINAL NOTE, MURASOLI, THE OFFICIAL DMK NEWSPAPER, IN
A REACTION TO CENSORSHIP, HAS BEGUN CARRYING INCONSEQUENTIAL AND
MEANINGLESS ARTICLES SUCH AS "LADY FINGERS A GOOD VEGETABLE FOR
HEALTH" AND "CASTER OIL WILL REDUCE THE BODY HEAT" AS MAJOR NEWS
ITEMS. OBVIOUSLY FEARING CLOSURE IF IT OPENLY OPPOSES CENSORSHIP,
THE PAPER IS OPPOSING IT IN THE ONLY WAY IT CAN. MURASOLI HAS
STOPPED CARRYING KARUNANIDHI'S DAILY LETTER TO THE TAMIL MASSES
(REPORTEDLY AT THE INSISTENCE OF THE POLICE) BUT HE IS SAID TO
CONTINUE TO MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PAPER AND MAY IN FACT
BE ESTABLISHING ITS GUIDELINES.
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Message Attributes

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